

Time...to Begin

As teachers, we have accepted a huge responsibility—the education, nurturing, safety, and welfare of young people. Parents trust us, for six hours per day, with their children. There is no greater responsibility.

Along with this tremendous obligation, teaching is hard work. It is frustrating, disillusioning, exhausting, hazardous and demanding. Studies show that the average teacher works fifty-four hours per week. What is unusual about our work is that these fifty-four hours allow no extended lunches away from work, no special fringe benefits, and no closing the office early to celebrate the birthday of a co-worker.

Our schedules are highly structured, not unlike the assembly line worker who must stop and start at the whistle. But in our case, we're not assembling inanimate parts, we're working with enthusiastic, vulnerable, impressionable children. We are truly *in the trenches* all day.

I wrote this book with two purposes in mind: first, to provide practical ways to gain control of your teaching time; second, to provide a different *slant* on how we view ourselves as professional teachers.

I don't believe that teaching needs to be a fifty-four hour per week job. Thirty-five hours per week seems reasonable since we

are actually in the classroom, with students, for only twenty-eight hours per week. To this end, I have tried to present techniques which will allow a substantial reduction in time spent “doing our job.”

I also feel that society should view us far differently than it does. In order to achieve the status we deserve, we’re going to have to change the way we treat ourselves and the way we present ourselves to the public at large. To generate this change, we need to show everyone with whom we come in contact that...

...teachers are *Professionals*

...teachers are *Managers*

...teachers are *Unique*

TEACHERS ARE PROFESSIONALS

Professional: “a person who has advanced and specialized training in liberal arts or science and applies this training in mental rather than manual work; including such professions as medicine, law, teaching, and engineering.”

This definition should clearly define our role. Teaching is not just “another job.” We have a scientific body of knowledge which is specific to our occupation. We make life-changing decisions day in and day out. We continually must retrain and upgrade our methods to reflect the changes in our specialties. Yet, for some reason, society doesn't generally acknowledge our status, and worse, neither do we! We don't view ourselves as being anything more than... teachers. This must change!

Physicians, attorneys, dentists, architects, investment bankers, and other professionals who deal with the public seem to have an

“air of arrogance” about them. While this sounds derogatory, it’s not meant to be. They exude a sense of self-respect that the public generally accepts and admires. They believe they’re special, they dress like they’re special, they conduct professional offices and yes, they can make money like they’re special.

And what do teachers do? We sometimes dress in jeans, sweatsuits, and shorts; we have unkempt classrooms; we allow people to seek our opinion (conference) without appointments; we argue over petty issues, forgetting about things that are important; we allow parents to debate or intimidate us on issues in which they have no background or understanding. In short, we are often our own worst enemies.

This doesn't mean we don't do a good job of teaching! It means, we aren't doing a good job of representing our profession to the public. Maybe it's because there are so many of us or maybe it's because everyone went to school so everyone feels that he or she is an expert on education.

Whatever the reason, we must assume our role and be professional in every sense of the word. You certainly won't convince all of your fellow teachers to change, but you can change your own point of view and in so doing, earn the respect you deserve.

TEACHERS ARE MANAGERS

Manager: “A person who has charge of or directs, conducts, and administers others in a supervisory and motivational role.”

As a teacher, you are the chief executive officer, chairman of the board, and president of your own corporation of thirty employees. Your classroom is corporate headquarters and your product is the

education of your students.

You are in charge of more people, in a more volatile environment, with more supervisors (parents and administration), than 95% of the managers in the world! This link to business is unmistakable. Approach your job as a business manager and the critics outside of school will begin to understand that you face the same problems and dilemmas that they face in their world. Your classroom is your business. Let parents and students know that you know how to run your business and that your business is successful!

TEACHERS ARE UNIQUE

Unique: "One and only; different from all others; having no like or equal."

One of the greatest things about teaching is that it allows almost complete freedom in the way you operate your classroom. School rules and obligations aside, when the door is closed, you are your own boss, and you can be as unique as you want to be. Very few occupations allow this amount of creativity and freedom.

In the context of this chapter, when I say teachers are *unique* I'm referring to the fact that we are different than other professionals in regard to our outlook on life. We became teachers knowing that our pay would never be equivalent to a corporate attorney or a surgeon. We chose this profession because we have an extra dose of humanism and patience. For some reason, we want to give something to our students and by giving, we get something intangible in return. It can't really be described but it's there.

We should all take pride in our ability to care about and help others. We have "*no like or equal.*"

The ideas presented in this book pose many opportunities to sharpen your professional, managerial, and unique skills. Effectively managing your time will make you a more organized, more thorough, happier, and better teacher. It will also give you some time to start working on your dreams.

Before you begin reading the chapters that follow, a few more points to remember:

First, there is very little discussion of instructional methods or delivery of curriculum in this book. Consultants abound who will suggest ways in which to change or improve your delivery of information to students.

This book accepts that your teaching style is unique and comfortable to you. My purpose is to give you some new ways to think about the mundane tasks of teaching—grading papers, preparing for a substitute, classroom management and discipline, and dealing with parents.

Second, for many teachers, preparing for lessons, grading papers, thinking of new lessons, and collecting materials is a hobby. If you love what you do and want to spend your free time working on school projects, I salute you! However, I think you will still find ideas that you can pull from these pages that will simplify some of the professional tasks which perhaps you don't enjoy completing.

Third, throughout this book you will be presented with many new and different ways of looking at your work as a teacher. There are ideas which you will be able to use immediately and others which you will need to adapt or adjust to your particular circumstances. Some you'll simply reject. Not all of the ideas apply to everyone.

Fourth, while I certainly don't claim to "know it all," this book is an attempt to share "all that I know" about managing your time as a teacher.